DEPLOYMENT

1. BACKGROUND

In support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), including Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and others, American military personnel are experiencing deployments of greater duration and frequency than was true prior to the events of September 11, 2001. For example, deployments of up to 12 months are common for ground forces supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Additionally, members of the reserve component—and particularly those in critical specialties experiencing a shortage of personnel—are being asked to bear a substantial share of the workload during the GWOT, and to temporarily put their civilian careers and goals on hold. For both the active and reserve components, there is concern that frequent, lengthy and unpredictable deployments may have consequences for retention, morale, readiness and other important military outcomes.

The Committee has been asked by DOD to continue to explore the effects of current deployments on Service members and their families. This report reviews the 2004 focus group information provided by Service members and provides updated deployment-related research reviewed for DACOWITS in 2004. Findings are presented in the following sections:

- Focus Group Results: Challenges during the Pre-Deployment, Deployment, and Post-Deployment Phases

- Research Findings: Impact of Deployment on Service members and their Coping Strategies

- Research Findings: Impact of Deployment on Families

- Focus Group Results: Specific Challenges for Children

- Research Findings: Impact of Deployment on Children of Military Parents

- Research Findings: Organizational Responses to the needs of Military Children

- Focus Group Results: Unique Deployment Challenges for Female Service Members

- Focus Group Results: Recommendations for Improvement Deployments

- Focus Group Results: Effects of Early Returns on Individual and Unit Morale

- Focus Group Results: Challenges For Reservists

- Research Findings: Unique Deployment-Related Issues for Reservists and their Families

- Organizational Responses to Deployments.

Each of these topics is discussed below.

2. FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: CHALLENGES DURING THE PRE-DEPLOYMENT, DEPLOYMENT, AND POST-DEPLOYMENT PHASES

2.1 Pre-deployment issues

During their 2004 focus groups, DACOWITS asked Service members and their family members to identify the challenges they encountered during the pre-deployment process. The pre-deployment issues that most frequently emerged within the focus groups are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Pre-deployment Challenges for Service members and Families*

Theme or challenge	Number and percent of groups in which theme emerged (n =63)	
Responsibilities of remaining prepared	49	78%
Unpredictability	37	59%
Childcare arrangements and issues	29	46%
Administrative issues	26	41%
Communication issues	15	24%
PERSTEMPO (pace of workload)	11	17%

* Numbers and percentages refer to groups and not to individuals.

The 2004 pre-deployment themes are discussed below. Also provided is a table presenting focus group results from each Service. Deployment issues raised in Reserve component groups are discussed in a later section.

Responsibilities of remaining prepared

Cited in more nearly four-fifths of the focus groups (78%), remaining prepared for a deployment emerged as the primary challenge that Service members and their families faced in the pre-deployment period. This theme had a number of dimensions. For example, an important aspect of preparedness—recorded in 14 groups—was the Service member's individual responsibility to be ready for deployment. One senior male officer in the Air Force summed this up succinctly:

> "This is the career you chose, so you must be ready for responsibilities."
> – Male senior officer, USAF

An additional dimension of remaining prepared, recorded in 16 groups, included the pre-deployment responsibility for being aware of the military support programs and services that were in place. Other aspects of remaining prepared included:

- Mental preparation (recorded in 14 groups)

- Balancing work and family (recorded in 11 groups)

- Making new family and/or household arrangements (recorded in 9 groups).

The challenge of shifting responsibilities within the family during pre-deployment was described in this way by one spouse, whose Service member was in the Coast Guard:

> "You have to deal with the knowledge that you will be running the show."
> -- Coast Guard spouse

The following quote was from an Air Force senior officer, who stressed that the pre-deployment process can run smoothly when Service members involve their support network in the process and are prepared:

> "We have a whole plan laid out: [my] family and friends are all pitching in."
> — Male senior officer, USAF

Participants in about one-fifth (17%) focus groups identified the need to balance work and family as part of the pre-deployment process. Although single and married Service members viewed the issue differently, they still identified it as stressful. Some married Service members felt that the military did not understand their need to spend time with their families prior to deployment. According to one senior enlisted female in the Air Force who was married with children:

> "You have to put up with the criticism [that] the military did not issue you children."
> --Senior enlisted female, USAF

In contrast, some single Service members felt that the military did not respect their non-family obligations (e.g., education) as much as the family obligations of married persons. As one Air Force junior enlisted single female put it:

> "[P]arents can leave work early, whereas single people can't leave early if they have extra schoolwork to do. How can you put a value on that?"- Junior enlisted female, USAF

Unpredictability

The impact of unpredictability in the timing of deployment was recorded in almost three-fifths (59%) of focus groups as a major challenge during the pre-deployment period. For some participants, the lack of advanced notification hindered adequate pre-deployment preparation, and left Service members and their loved ones feeling aggravated. One Marine Corps family member explained that her spouse's departure date kept changing, which was "extremely frustrating and hard on the kids."

Childcare arrangements and issues

About half (46%) of focus groups contained participants who identified childcare as a pre-deployment challenge. Creating and implementing family care plans were stressful for Service members and their families. Preparing both themselves and their children for the impending deployment also emerged as an aspect of this theme. One senior enlisted female in the Marine Corps explained that the most difficult part of the pre-deployment process was:

> "…trying to prepare my child that I would be gone for 6 months."
> Senior enlisted female--USMC

Childcare issues related to being part of a dual military household were also raised and included both the frustration of making childcare arrangements on base, and the worry that both parents might be deployed simultaneously.

Administrative issues

Completing administrative requirements emerged as a pre-deployment theme in about two-fifths (41%) of the focus groups. Specific pre-deployment administrative challenges that were cited included:

- Managing financial matters, such as arranging how bills would be paid (recorded in 19 groups)

- Making legal arrangements, such as power of attorney and wills (recorded in 18 groups).

Communication issues

Communication issues were recorded as a pre-deployment concern in about one-fourth (24%) of groups. Dispersing information and establishing points-of-contact were the issues most often cited, although focus group members were also concerned about the communication between spouses and within families. Both the quality and quantity of information concerned family members: participants explained that sometimes Service members "do not always bring home the right information," or "forget to pass on deployment information to their spouses."

Service members also commented on the challenge of internal family communications during the pre-deployment process. One junior enlisted male in the Army Reserve elaborated:

"When I go away, I have a lot of clarification to do with my family. You try to put them in a comfort zone, [but] there is an unending [number of] questions that come to you."
Junior enlisted male-USAR

PERSTEMPO (pace of workload)

One-fifth of focus groups expressed frustration with the pre-deployment schedule. Specifically, participants mentioned that the hectic pace preceding deployment was stressful and that the quantity of pre-deployment training detracted from time spent with family.

Findings By Service

Table 2 displays, by Service, the number and percent of groups that identified each of the major pre-deployment themes.

Table 2: Pre-deployment challenges by Service

Theme	Army (n = 7)		Air Force (n = 14)		Navy (n = 9)		Marine Corps (n = 9)		Coast Guard (n = 9)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Responsibilities of being prepared	5	71%	9	64%	8	89%	5	56%	8	89%
Unpredictability	2	29%	9	64%	3	33%	7	77%	6	67%
Childcare arrangements and issues	3	43%	8	57%	5	56%	2	22%	4	44%
Administrative issues	3	43%	2	14%	5	56%	6	67%	4	44%
Communication issues	1	14%	3	21%	6	67%	1	11%	1	11%
PERSTEMPO (Pace of workload)	3	43%	1	7%	1	11%	4	44%	0	0%

Table 2 indicates that the major pre-deployment themes remained consistent across the services. The exceptions were that participants in the Marine Corps groups were less likely to raise childcare as a pre-deployment issue, and that participants in Air Force groups were somewhat less likely to stress administrative issues. Also, participants in Navy groups were the most likely to discuss challenges relating to communication.

Comparison With 2003 Findings

While it is important to note that different installations were visited in 2004, and that there were some differences in the protocols used during 2003 and 2004, most of the deployment challenges that were recorded by in DACOWITS in 2004 were quite similar to those reported by Service members and families in 2003. For example, the theme of unpredictability was stressed within a similar percentage of groups in both years (59% and 57%, respectively).[1]

Table 3, which revisits the major themes recorded in 2003 during the discussion of deployment challenges, shows that making administrative preparations was the dominant pre-deployment theme in 2003. This theme was recorded in a smaller percentage of groups in 2004 (41%), probably because the topic of childcare—which was part of the broader theme of administrative preparations in 2003—is considered a separate theme in 2004. About half (46%) of groups in 2004 contained participants who raised childcare as a pre-deployment issue.

Table 3: Pre-Deployment-Related Challenges Recorded in DACOWITS Focus Groups 2003

Theme	Percent of groups in which theme was raised
Administrative preparations (Wills, Power of Attorney, childcare etc.)	69%
Making arrangements on short or uncertain notice (i.e., unpredictability)	57%
Impact on the family	50%
Need for accurate and timely information	43%

An additional change from 2003 was the emphasis on the "responsibilities of being prepared"—a theme that was recorded in most groups (78%) in 2004. Encouragingly, the prevalence of this theme across groups may indicate an increasingly seasoned deploying force with an evolving recognition of the demands of separation.

2.2 Issues during deployment

DACOWITS also asked Service members and their family members to identify the challenges they encountered during the deployment itself. The themes that most frequently emerged within the focus groups are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: During-Deployment Challenges for Service members and Families*

Theme	Number and percentage of groups in which theme emerged (n =60)	
Adjustment to lifestyle and role changes	46	77%
Communication issues	41	68%
Work and family balance	38	63%
Impact on children/childcare issues	38	64%
Administrative problems	19	32%
Fluctuating deployment schedules	15	25%
Program service and delivery	14	23%

These during-deployment challenges are discussed below. It is noteworthy that many these themes are similar to those identified as challenges of the pre-deployment period.

Adjustment to lifestyle and role changes

Cited in 77% of focus groups, difficulty in adjusting to lifestyle and role changes was the primary theme that emerged as a challenge of the deployment period. Primarily, participants reported experiencing emotional adjustment problems that included loneliness, depression, isolation, and fear of loss (recorded in 27 groups). One mid-grade enlisted male in the Air Force explained that his wife "lost her sense of security" while he was gone. Numerous other focus group participants simply reported that it gets lonely during deployment.

Many participants, however, expressed the ability to adapt to the role changes caused by deployments, such as this senior officer:

> "I've traveled throughout my career. My wife has adapted to it and has taken care of all of the varied responsibilities. It's tough on her, don't get me wrong, but she handles it great, very independent." – Male senior officer, USAF

Within Service member groups specifically, participants explained that they needed to adjust to a host of job-related factors such as increased workload and "new leadership at deployed location" (recorded in 16 groups). Participants also experienced problems adjusting to both foreign environments and cultures, citing difficulties with time zone changes, weather patterns, remote locations, and language barriers (recorded in 13 groups).

Communication issues

Comments related to communication and to the dispersal and/or the receipt of information were recorded in two-thirds of the focus groups (68%). One junior enlisted male explained:

> "Communications are either very brief or non-existent."— Junior enlisted male, USA

Family members identified specific concerns, including the frustration of trying to separate rumors from truth, and the inadequacy or unavailability of e-mail and satellite telephones. Some family members were frustrated with being unable to obtain details about the deployment and their Service member's physical well being or whereabouts. One Marine Corps spouse said that her most difficult challenge during deployment was "not being able to communicate" with her spouse.

Work and family balance

Participants in approximately two-thirds (63%) of the focus groups identified challenges related to balancing work and family during the deployment period. These challenges primarily revolved around meeting family responsibilities, such as being able to call on their child's birthday or attend their grandparent's funeral.

One Marine Corps family member explained how this kind of problem affected her eldest son, who joked that "Dad likes his younger son more" because her spouse had missed most of their older son's birthdays. Service members also described difficulty in maintaining interpersonal relationships, particularly with their spouses and children. Other relationships were also strained; for example, one junior enlisted female reported breaking off her engagement.

Impact on children/childcare issues

Related to the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities was the issue of the impact of deployment on children, a theme that emerged in nearly two-thirds (63%) of the focus groups. The quality, availability, reliability, and cost of childcare and/or youth activities continued to challenge Service members during the deployment period (recorded in 23 groups).

Participants within about half (45%) of focus groups identified the deployment as adversely affecting children's emotional well-being, behavior, and school performance. Commonly observed problems among young children and teenagers included developing an insecure attachment, demonstrating a fear of loss, stunted academic progress, and displaying a lot of rebellion and confusion.

Administrative problems

The theme of administrative problems emerged in approximately one-third (32%) of the focus groups. Issues most frequently mentioned were problems related to managing finances, exercising powers of attorney, using healthcare benefits, obtaining basic pay, and searching for housing.

Fluctuating deployment schedules

As in the pre-deployment period, the uncertainty of deployment schedules represented another aspect of the process described as challenging (recorded in 15 groups). Participants reported feeling distressed by the inaccuracy of the actual deployment schedule or actual length of the deployment. Not knowing these details was difficult for both Service members and their families. According to one spouse, her husband

> "should have been gone 90 days, [but] was gone for 178 days. We went through a lot of disappointments." – Family member, USAF

Support programs and services

Participants within about one-fourth (23%) of the focus groups reported dissatisfaction with the adequacy and availability of support services during the deployment. These participants cited several different reasons as to why there wasn't a good support group in place for the people who remained behind. For example:

- Some Service members in certain career fields who deployed individually reported there were not family support groups in place for their family members

- Family readiness groups and units did not always greet new families who arrived after the main body of Service members had departed

- Base-oriented formal and informal support networks unintentionally excluded those living off base.

Some focus group participants suggested that enlisted Service members and their families tended to use family support services less often than the families of more senior Service members. Among those who were dissatisfied with support programs, some felt that family services were not as user-friendly as they should be.

Findings By Service

Table 5 displays, by Service, the number and percent of groups that identified each of the major during-deployment themes. The Table indicates that the same major themes that were identified across the groups overall also tended to emerge within each individual Service.

Table 5: During-deployment challenges by Service

Theme	Army (n = 8)		Air Force (n = 11)		Navy (n = 9)		Marine Corps (n = 9)		Coast Guard (n = 8)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Adjusting to lifestyle and role changes	4	50%	8	73%	9	100%	8	89%	7	88%
Communication problems	5	63%	6	55%	7	78%	6	67%	5	63%
Work/Family balance	4	50%	5	45%	9	100%	5	56%	7	88%
Impact on children/childcare issues	4	50%	5	45%	8	89%	5	56%	6	75%
Administrative problems	0	0%	5	45%	4	44%	1	11%	2	25%
Programs and service delivery	2	25%	4	36%	0	0%	0	0%	3	38%

Comparison with 2003 Findings

Most of the during-deployment challenges recorded by DACOWITS in 2004 were the same that emerged in 2003. For example, comments related to program support and service delivery, recorded in about one-fourth of groups in 2004, was also mentioned within a similar percentage (24%) of groups in 2003. An exception was that comments about the challenge of adjusting to new roles and responsibilities were recorded in a larger number of groups in 2004 (78%) than in 2003 (29%).

Table 6: Challenges During Deployment Recorded in DACOWITS Focus Groups 2003*

Theme	Percent of groups in which theme was raised
Impact on the family	50%
Need for accurate and timely information	43%
Program support and service delivery	38%
Communication between deployed member and family	31%
Role adjustment	29%
Financial issues	24%

* "Impact on the family" and "need for accurate and timely information" represent themes that appeared across all phases of deployment in 2003.

2.3 Post-deployment Issues

DACOWITS also asked Service members and their family members to identify the challenges they encountered during the post-deployment period. The themes that most frequently emerged are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Post-Deployment Challenges for Service members and Families*

Theme	Number and percent of groups in which theme emerged (n = 59)	
Reunion and readjustment	53	90%
Administrative and financial issues	20	34%
Leave	8	14%

These themes are discussed below.

Reunion and Readjustment

Participants in nearly all (90%) of the focus groups identified reunion and readjustment as the major challenge of the post-deployment period. While participants reported problems adapting to lifestyle changes (e.g., slower tempo, different structure) and "getting back into the swing of working again," the major aspect of this theme was the difficulty in reestablishing relationships and family dynamics. For example, participants described as challenging the reintegration of Service members into the family routine, and the renegotiation of household role responsibilities. Several Service members expressed concern that their younger children no longer recognized them, or continued to rely only on the parent who had not been deployed. Both family members and Service members felt it was taxing to

"…try to fit [one another] back into [their] lives again." – Family member, USMC

Some Service members expressed sensitivity to these issues, suggesting that efforts by military human service providers to educate the force about the challenges of reunion have been effective:

"I had to know if there were any new rules for the kids. I'm just going to sit back and learn from my wife about how things have been adapting. I want to flow seamlessly back into family life; I don't want to disrupt things." – Senior enlisted male, USAF

Administrative and Financial issues

Administrative and financial issues were recorded in approximately one-third of the focus groups (34%). Participants in about one-fifth (18%) of focus groups described financial challenges, including reports of spouses mismanaging fiscal accounts during the deployment. For example, one junior enlisted female in the Army Reserve explained that while she was activated, her husband took over the responsibility of paying their bills:

"My accounts were screwed up when I got back. It took 3 months to get [it straightened] out."
--Junior Enlisted female, USAR

Less frequently mentioned administrative issues included:

■   Amount of time spent in-processing and debriefing (recorded in 3 groups)

- ▪ Problems with civilian job (recorded in 3 groups)

- ▪ Inadequacy and unavailability of healthcare (recorded in 2 groups).

Leave

Participants within a few focus groups (14%) identified the lack of post-deployment leave or vacation time as a challenge, explaining that not being able to take leave hindered the ability to re-connect with families and generally readjust to post-deployment life.

Findings By Service

Table 8 displays, by Service, the number and percent of groups that identified each of the major post-deployment themes. The percentage with which each post-deployment theme was recorded was similar across the Services, with the exception that participants within the sea Service groups (i.e., Navy, Coast Guard) did not raise the issue of post-deployment leave. This may be a consequence of differences in post-deployment and/or leave policies in these Services. Regardless of Service, the theme of reunion and readjustment was the most frequently mentioned theme among participants in each of the five Service member groups.

Table 8: Post-deployment challenges by Service

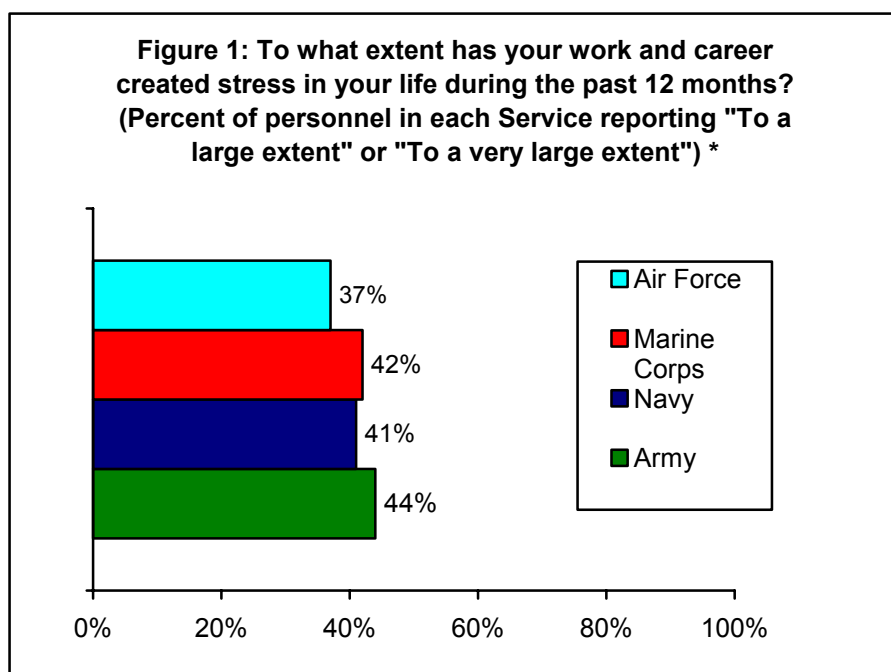| Theme	Army (n = 8)		Air Force (n = 11)		Navy (n = 9)		Marine Corps (n = 8)		Coast Guard (n = 8)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reunion and readjustment	8	100%	9	82%	9	100%	7	88%	8	100%
Administrative and financial issues	3	38%	2	18%	2	22%	2	25%	2	25%
Leave	3	38%	2	18%	0	0%	1	13%	0	0%

Comparison with 2003 Findings

Most post-deployment challenges recorded by DACOWITS in 2004 were comparable to those reported by Service members and families in 2034. For example, the theme of administrative and financial issues, recorded in one-third (34%) of groups in 2004, was cited by participants in about one-fourth (24%) of groups in 2003 (recorded as "financial issues"). Reunion adjustment was the leading post-deployment theme in both years, but these comments were recorded in a much larger number of groups in 2004 than in 2003 (91% vs. 33%) This difference may be a product of DACOWITS' greater focus on phase-specific challenges in 2004. Alternatively, the emphasis on the challenges of reunion and readjustment may be related to differences in the length of the deployments experienced by participants in 2004 vs. 2003.

3.   RESEARCH FINDINGS: IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENT ON SERVICE MEMBERS AND COPING STRATEGIES

2003 Status of Forces Survey: Deployment and Work-Related Stress. The figures provided below contrast the four Department of Defense (DoD) Services with respect to work and deployment-related stress among Service members, based on data from the March 2003 *Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members* (SOFA) administered by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC).

On the March SOFA survey—which was administered to a random sample of Service members in each Service—participants were asked: "To what extent have the following circumstances created stress in your life during the past 12 months?" Among the circumstances that were separately assessed were "work and career (for example, hours, coworkers, change, supervisors)" and "deployments". Figure 1 displays the percentage of respondents, within each Service, who reported that work and career created stress in their lives "to a large extent" or "to a very large extent".

Figure 1: To what extent has your work and career created stress in your life during the past 12 months? (Percent of personnel in each Service reporting "To a large extent" or "To a very large extent") *
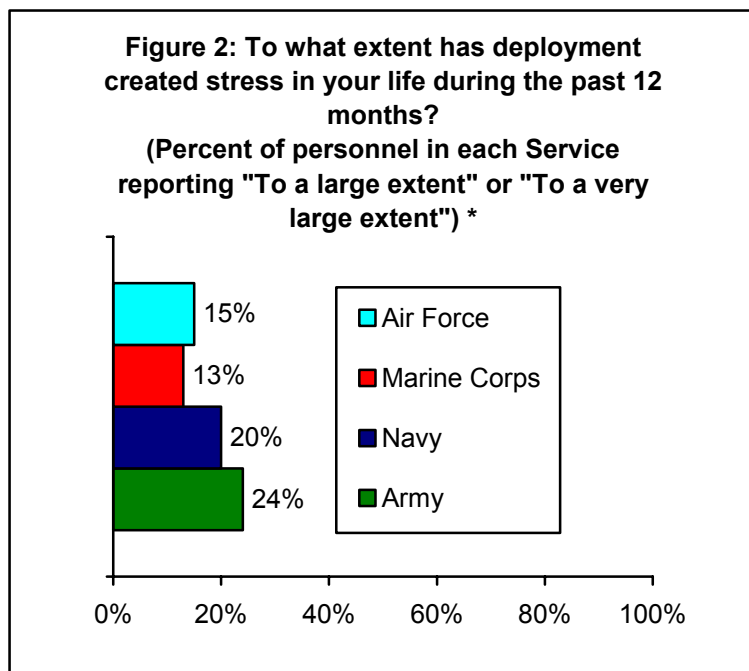
* Source: March 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members: Tabulations of Responses. DMDC

The data in Figure 1 indicate that within each Service, roughly two-fifths of active-duty personnel believe that circumstances related to their work and career have caused a large or very large amount of personal stress over the past year. Considering that the margin of error for each estimate is about 3%, there is a statistically significant difference between the percentage of Army personnel (44%) and Air Force personnel (37%) who report high levels of work-related stress. Percentage differences between the Marine Corps, Navy and Army are not statistically significant, given the reported margin of error. There was not a significant difference in the

percentage of male and female Service members who reported high level of work related stress over the past year (41% vs. 45%, respectively).

Figure 2 displays the percentage of respondents, within each Service, who reported that deployment created stress in their lives "to a large extent" or "to a very large extent" during the past year.

Figure 2: To what extent has deployment created stress in your life during the past 12 months?
(Percent of personnel in each Service reporting "To a large extent" or "To a very large extent") *

* Source: March 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members: Tabulations of Responses. DMDC.

Figure 2 clearly indicates that, compared to the other Services, a larger percentage of Army personnel reported high levels of deployment-related stress at the time of the survey. The percentages are smaller for each Service in Figure 2 (deployment stress) than in Figure 1 (work-related stress) because not everyone who took the survey had experienced a deployment during the past 12 months. Therefore, the findings shown in Figure 2 should be considered in light of the percentages of personnel from each Service who had actually experienced deployment.
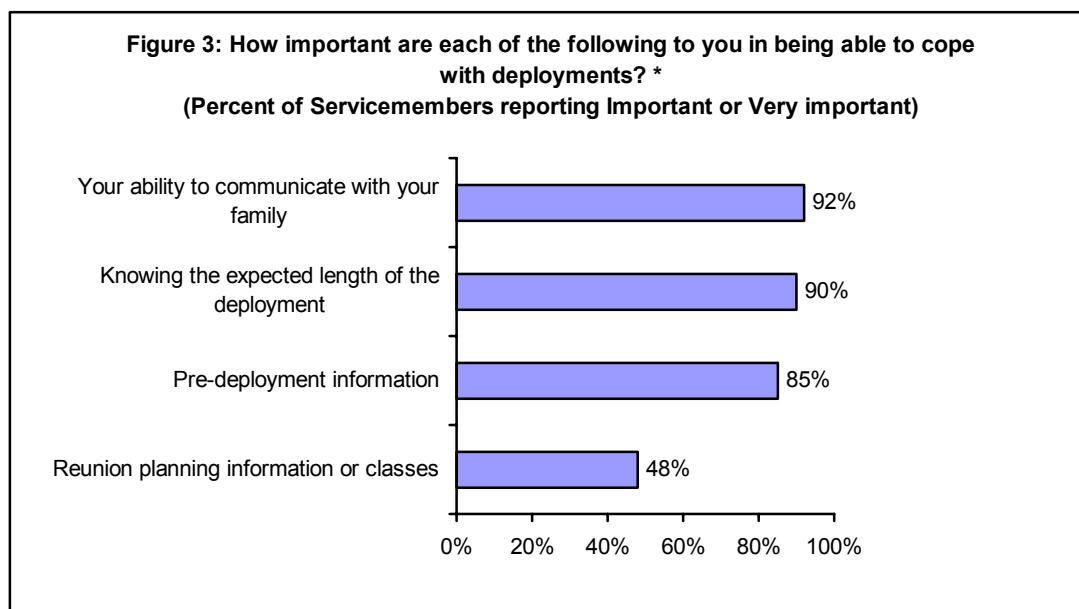
On the March 2003 survey, the percentage of Service members who reported being away from their permanent duty station for 30 days or more during the past 12 months was highest in the Army (49%) followed by the Air Force (39%), the Navy (38%) and the Marine Corps (37%). Because the Army had the largest percentage of personnel who reported being away from home for 30 days or more, the higher level of deployment-related stress among this Service's personnel is not surprising. On a separate item from the July 2003 SOFA, Army Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) participants were more likely to report stress in their work lives compared to DoD overall (66% vs. 52%, respectively).[3]

Walter Reed Study. Among the most recent research on the effect of deployment on Service members is a study on the impact of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan on the mental health of U.S Army and Marine Corps personnel, and the potential barriers to mental health care

for combat veterans. This study, led by psychiatrists and other specialists from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and reported in the July 2004 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, involved surveys of more than 6000 members of 4 combat infantry units. Three of the four units were surveyed both prior to, and after, the deployment.
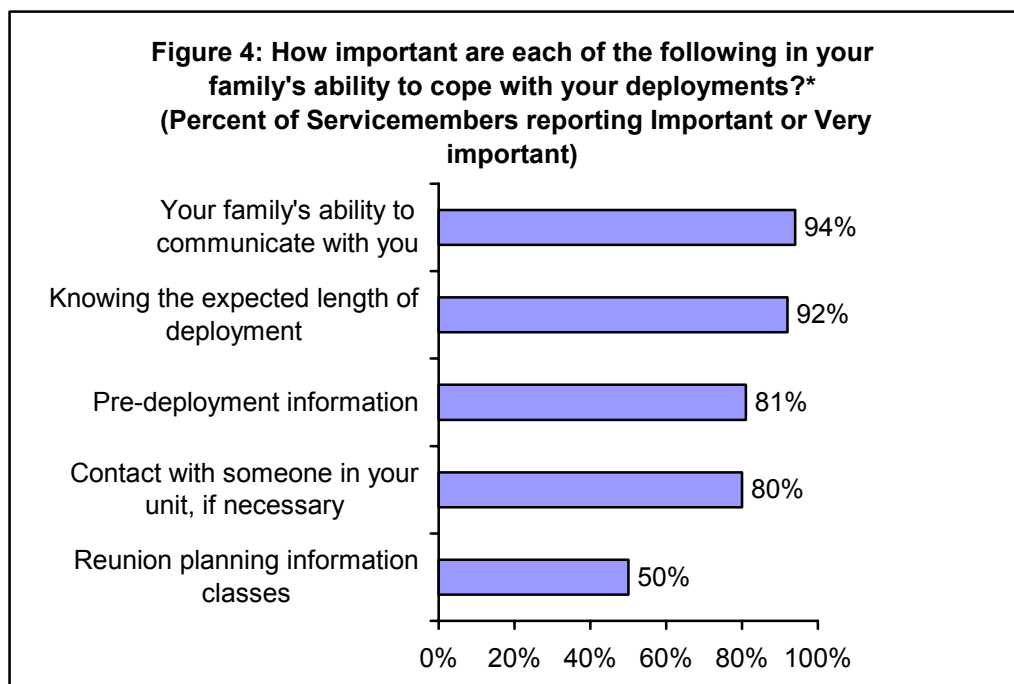
The researchers found that "the percentage of study participants whose responses met the screening criteria indicating the presence of major depression, generalized anxiety or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was significantly higher after duty in Iraq (15.6% to 17.1%) than after duty in Afghanistan (11.2%) or before deployment to Iraq (9.3%)." [4] The study also found that less than half (between 23% and 40%) of personnel whose responses indicated a probable mental disorder actually sought treatment, an outcome that the authors noted is also common in the civilian sector. Among potential reasons for not seeking treatment, Soldiers and Marines reported that seeking mental health services is stigmatizing. For example, among those respondents who screened positive for mental health disorders (i.e., those most in need of mental health treatment), nearly two-thirds agreed they "would be perceived as weak"(65%) if they sought help, or their "unit leadership might treat [them] differently" (63%).

Coping with Deployments. Military personnel rely on a number of methods to deal with the stress of deployment. Data from the March 2003 SOFA indicate that Service members with recent deployment experience most frequently cite communication and predictability as important factors in their ability to cope with deployments (Figure 3). "Ability to communicate with family" and "knowing the expected length of deployment" were rated as important or very important by nine-tenths (92% and 90%, respectively) of Service members with deployment experience or for whom a deployment was pending.[5] Related to the issue of predictability, more than four-fifths (85%) of Service members reported that pre-deployment information was important or very important in coping with deployment. In contrast, slightly less than one-half (48%) described reunion planning information or classes as important or very important.

Figure 3: How important are each of the following to you in being able to cope with deployments? *
(Percent of Servicemembers reporting Important or Very important)

* Source: March 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members: Tabulations of Responses. DMDC.

When asked to rate the importance of various factors in their <u>family's</u> ability to cope with deployment, more than nine-tenths of Service members reported that their family's ability to communicate with them (94%) and knowing the expected length of deployment (92%) were important or very important in helping their family cope (Figure 4). Other factors Service members considered important or very important for their families included pre-deployment information (81%) and contact with someone in the unit during deployment (80%). Service members again placed less emphasis on the importance of reunion planning information classes (50%).

Figure 4: How important are each of the following in your family's ability to cope with your deployments?*
(Percent of Servicemembers reporting Important or Very important)

* Source: March 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members: Tabulations of Responses. DMDC.

As shown below in Table 9, time with family and time with friends were the factors that Service members most frequently reported as helpful in reducing stress in their lives. Vacation time, physical exercise and entertainment were also emphasized as important stress-reducers.

**Table 9: Stress reducers cited by Service members***

To what extent have the following reduced stress in your life in the past 12 months?	Percent reporting Large or Very large extent
Time with family	62%
Time with friends	55%
Vacation time	54%
Work out/physical activity	47%
TV/movies/music/Internet or other recreation or hobbies	45%
Religious programs	18%
Second income	17%
Spouse employment	14%

* Source: March 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members: Tabulations of Responses. DMDC

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS: IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENT ON FAMILIES

National Military Families Association Research. The National Military Families Association (NMFA) recently conducted a research study aimed at identifying gaps in military family support best practices, and the role of non-profits and civilian community organizations in serving the military community during current deployments.[6] The 2004 study, entitled "*Serving the Home Front*" and funded by Sears, collected data from Service members, military family members, support providers, and literature. The study incorporated a web survey of military family members and Service members from all four DoD Service branches. Survey respondents reflected a wide range of military experience, rank, and years of service from both the Active and Reserve components. Several key findings from the NMFA survey are highlighted below.[7]

The large majority of respondents (82%) in the NMFA study had either participated in a deployment or experienced the deployment of their spouse at least once since September 11, 2001. Among respondents serving in the Guard or Reserve, or married to a Guard or Reserve member, this figure was even higher (92%). Among those reporting experience with deployment, one-third (33%) reported it lasted between 7 months and one year, and one-fourth (24%) reported the deployment lasted more than a year (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Deployment Length Among NMFA Survey Respondents with Deployment Experience*
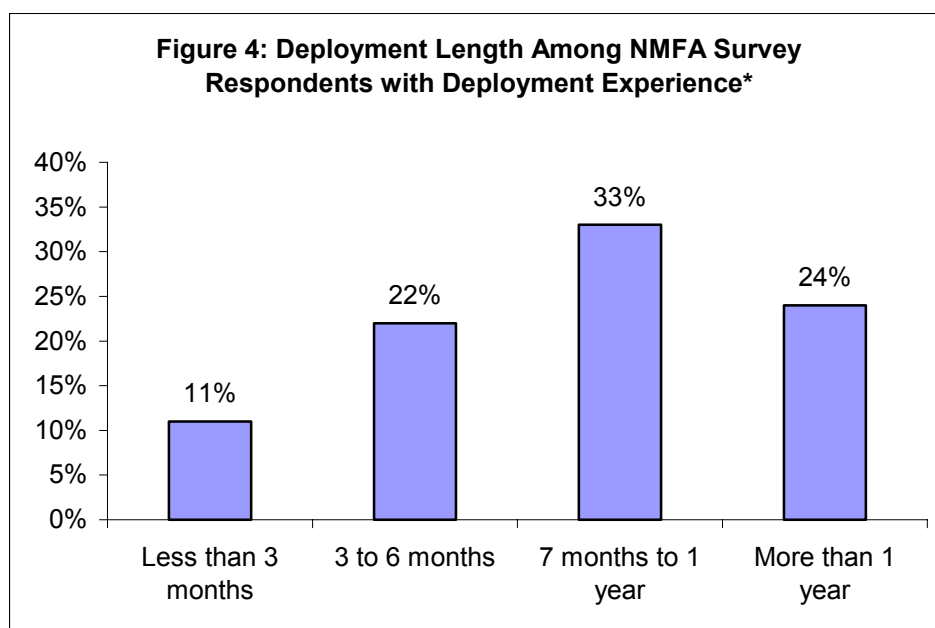
Source: National Military Family Association. (2004). *Serving the Home Front*. Briefing to the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). Data include both Service member and military spouse respondents.

Among its major findings, the NMFA's study recommendations emphasized the need for informed, clear and proactive communication between Service members, military families, commanders, units, and service providers. NMFA findings stressed that broad-based, proactive communication and information sharing can help ensure program coordination— a key element

needed to support military families during deployment. Researchers also suggested that the military should provide standardized, continuous training at all echelons, including, but not limited to, commanders, representatives, support providers, and family members. This will help ensure the consistent functioning and utilization of military family programs and services.

Additional conclusions from the NMFA study included the following:

- Strong partnerships among and between military and community agencies are critical to ensure family and Service member's access to programs and services that meet needs arising from challenges due to deployment

- The outpouring of community spirit, good will, and resources fills gaps in military family support services for all military families, but especially for isolated families and non-ID card holders.[8]

Research on Programs to Help Families Adapt to Deployments. Military families that are unable to adapt to the stress and challenges of deployments are more likely to be dissatisfied with the military life and tend to be less supportive of the member's retention decision. Though research has shown that military family members most frequently utilize informal resources (e.g., friends and relatives) as their first line of support[9], each Service has developed numerous formal programs to enhance family adaptation during deployment. A number of military family programs and services have been found to be effective at strengthening the self-reliance and coping skills of spouses who choose to participate.

For example, an Army-wide evaluation and assessment of the Army Family Team Building (AFTB) program in 2001-2002 suggests that Army spouses gain increased familiarity with the Army, more realistic expectations of Army life and greater self-sufficiency[11] as a result of participation in AFTB. Similarly, data collected during the *Survey of Army Families* (SAF IV) in 2001 indicate that spouses who participated in unit-based Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) and in AFTB were more likely than non-participants to report they were adjusting well to Army demands (86% vs. 66%, respectively), and coping with loneliness (68% vs. 48%, respectively).[13]

Unfortunately, available data indicate that military family support programs are underutilized and lack widespread participation by spouses. For example, in their recent study examining Army spouse integration into the military community, Burell and colleagues analyzed survey results completed by several hundred Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard spouses.[14] These researchers found that, while nearly nine-tenths (88%) of Active component spouses reported their Soldier's unit had an FRG, more than two-fifths (43%) said they do not attend.

Similarly, the majority (57%) of Active component Army spouses reported they had not taken AFTB training, and less than half (44%) reported they were friends with another spouse in the unit. Not surprisingly, spouses whose Soldiers served in either the Army Reserve or the Army National Guard reported much lower participation and military community integration than spouses from the Active component (Table 10).

Table 10: Indicators of integration into military life among active component Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard spouses*

Integration Indicator	Active component Army Spouses	Army Reserve Spouses	Army National Guard Spouses
Yes, my soldier's unit does have FSG.	88%	52%	54%
I do not attend FSG meetings.	43%	86%	79%
I have not taken AFTB training	57%	77%	83%
I have no friends who are unit spouses	44%	76%	53%

* Source: Burrell, L., Durand, D.B., & Fortado, J. (2003). "Military community integration and its effect on well-being and retention." *Armed Forces & Society* 30: pg. 15.

Burell and colleagues reported low levels of community integration for all three groups of spouses, and also noted that a spouse's level of integration was related to their subsequent retention preferences. That is, the more the spouse was integrated with the larger military community, the more likely she/he was supportive of the Service member's decision to remain in the military. Overall, these findings corroborate those of researchers analyzing data from the *Survey of Army Families IV*, who conclude that "high percentages of spouses…are unaware of, and do not participate in, programs such as AFTB and FRGs designed to prepare families for Army life." [15]

5. FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN

DACOWITS also asked Service members and their family members to identify specific challenges for children in dealing with the deployment of a family member. Responses are grouped into three age groups: young children, school-age children, and teens. Many similarities emerged across these age groupings, but some age-specific trends were evident. Not all groups contained personnel with children who had experienced a deployment.

5.1 Young children

The themes that most frequently emerged within the focus groups with respect to young children (those not yet attending school) were:

- Missing the absent parent or feelings of loss (9 of 31 groups – 28%)

- Not understanding what was going on (6 of 31 groups – 19%)

- Failure to recognize the deployed parent on return (5 of 31 groups – 19%)

Some participants felt that the strain of deployment was "tougher with younger children." Specifically, focus group members reported that it was difficult to explain deployment to young children because they did not understand what it involved. Young children missed the absent parent, sometimes feeling insecure or fearful. Several Service members explained that their

young children did not recognize them when they returned from the deployment. For example, one family member revealed that her son thought the babysitter was his father.

In contrast, some parents of young children identified positive aspects of deployment for their children, such as the strengthening of family and community bonds:

> "You can actually build stronger families, since there is a demand on working together."
> – Male senior officer, USAF

"I didn't have any issues when he was deployed. My daughter was like 'my dad's fighting the bad guys.' She was secure enough and she announced it one night when we were at Friendly's [for dinner]. The people were so nice and they paid for our meal." – Family member, USA

Findings By Service

Table 11 displays the frequency, by Service, with which themes related to young children were recorded. Air Force Service member groups most frequently identified the failure of children to recognize the deployed parent on their return as an issue with young children. Reserve and Guard groups primarily noted young children's anxiety over their missing parent and their fear of loss.

Table 11: Deployment challenges for young children, by Service*

Theme	Army (n = 5)		Air Force (n = 5)		Navy (n = 5)		Marine Corps (n =6)		Coast Guard (n = 4)		Guard and Reserve (n = 6)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Separation anxiety/missing parents/fear of loss	2	40%	2	40%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%	3	50%
Not understanding what was going on	1	20%	0	0%	1	20%	3	50%	0	0%	1	17%
Failure to recognize deployed the parent on return	1	20%	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%
Interrupted or stunted development	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Self-blame and guilt	1	20%	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

* The "n" in each column indicates the total number of groups within each Service for which responses were recorded for this question.

5.2 School-aged children

The themes that most frequently emerged within the focus groups with respect to school-aged children (those not yet teens) were:

- Declining academic performance (8 of 19 groups – 42%)

- Discipline problems (6 of 19 groups – 42%)

- Changing schools (3 of 19 groups – 16%)

■   Missing absent parent (3 of 19 groups – 16%).

For these children, the primary problems identified by focus group members were related to school. Focus group participants reported that the academic performance of some children declined and that others faced the challenges of changing schools. One senior female officer explained that every time she and her family moved, her son failed a grade.

Focus group participants cited discipline problems (e.g., "acting out") among this age group. Also, some participants noted that school-aged children experienced feelings of abandonment or fear of loss. For instance, one junior enlisted male in the Army Reserve observed:

> "[My] 9 year-old was the worst one. He understands a lot more than the other ones. He was scared and said, 'Dad, don't die.'"—Junior enlisted male, USAR

Some participants stressed the support they received with their school-aged children during this difficult time:

> "Thank god, we had male teachers for my kids…it helped a bunch. Now, since I've been back they [my children] check to see if I'm in bed at night."— Senior enlisted male, USA

> "Primary schools here in northern country are pretty good about catering to the needs of the deployment."— Senior enlisted male, USA

Findings By Service

Table 12 displays, by Service, the number and percent of groups that identified each of the major themes Service members observed among their school-aged children during deployment. At least one group within each Service but the Army noted declining academic performance among school age children. The need to change schools was mentioned predominantly in Guard and Reserve groups.

Table 12: Deployment challenges among school-aged children by Service

Theme	Army (n = 1)		Air Force (n = 4)		Navy (n = 4)		Marine Corps (n = 3)		Coast Guard (n = 2)		Guard and Reserve (n =5)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Declining or stunted academic performance	0	0%	2	50%	3	75%	1	33%	1	50%	1	20%
Discipline problems	1	100%	0	0%	2	50%	1	33%	1	50%	1	20%
Changing schools	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	60%
Missing absent parent	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	1	33%	0	0%	1	20%

5.3 Teens

The themes that most frequently emerged within the focus groups with respect to teens were:

- Discipline problems (10 of 21 groups – 48%)

- Missing the absent parent (6 of 21 groups – 25%).

Generally speaking, focus group members agreed that "there's a lot of rebellion and confusion among teens," but, as one senior enlisted female in the Coast Guard observed, deployment seemed to exacerbate discipline problems:

"My teenager was suspended from school the last two times the Coast Guard was deployed."
--Senior enlisted female, USCG

Other discipline problems included "acting out," "not listening," and "staying out late and missing curfew." Focus groups participants also reported that some teens had difficulty in adjusting to a Service member's absence. The following comments are examples:

"Mom, how are we going to survive with Dad and my younger sister with you gone?" (son of senior enlisted female) – Senior Enlisted Female, USAF

"My oldest just doesn't want to do anything. A lot of it is they are used to you being there and when you are gone they feel abandoned." - Female Junior Officer, USMC

Other Service members noted that the impact of deployments on teens is temporary, and that they soon get back to normal:

"When dad returns, people readjust in their roles. Dad resumes the role his older male children assumed in his absence." – Junior Enlisted Male, USA

Findings By Service

Table 13 displays, by Service, the number and percent of groups that identified each of the major themes participants observed among teenage children during deployment.

Table 13: Deployment challenges among teenage children by Service

Theme	Army (n = 3)		Air Force (n = 3)		Navy (n = 6)		Marine Corps (n = 3)		Coast Guard (n = 2)		Guard and Reserve (n =4)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Discipline problems	1	33%	0	0%	5	83%	2	67%	1	50%	1	25%
Missing absent parent	1	33%	2	67%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	75%

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS: IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENT ON CHILDREN OF MILITARY PARENTS

Background. Children growing up in today's military families are doing so in a period characterized by longer, more frequent and more unpredictable deployments than in the past

several decades, making it important to continue to assess the impact of deployment on the well-being of military children.[16] While the effects of deployments during the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) have yet to be determined, several studies using pre-war data have addressed the topic more generally. Most of these studies have found a significant negative relationship between deployment-related parental absence and one or more aspects of children's well being.

The consequences of growing up in a military family are not all negative, however, as U.S. Military Academy professor Morten Ender points out in one of the most recent volumes available on the subject of children in military and other highly mobile families.[17] Many military children, for example, get to experience foreign cultures that children in civilian families may never see. In the forward to this recent volume—entitled *Military Brats and other Global Nomads*—sociologist Mady W. Segal notes that: "new research tends to show that earlier clinical studies [of military children] over-represented the proportion of children negatively affected by aspects of the military lifestyle."[18] In contrast to these early clinical studies, Professor Ender— himself a "military brat"— includes a range of studies that highlight both the positive and the negative aspects of growing up in military families. Selected findings from this volume are discussed later in this section.

Pierce, Vinokur and Buck study (1998) of children of deployed mothers in the Air Force. Though most early research on the impact of deployment on children focused on cases in which the father was the deployed parent, deployments during Desert Storm and Desert Shield provided researchers with an opportunity to examine the effect of mothers' deployment also. Pierce and colleagues conducted a study measuring the adjustment of children of 263 Air Force mothers deployed during the first Gulf War.[19] Two-fifths (39%) of the mothers were from the active duty Air Force and the remainder (61%) were activated members of the Air Force Reserve. Researchers assessed children's adjustment problems during the deployment using a widely recognized behavioral checklist, measuring outcomes such as anxiety, happiness, cooperation, and depression.[20] Researchers found that children tended to display greater adjustment problems (e.g., more anxiety, depression, aggressive behavior, impulsiveness) when:

- The deploying mother experienced difficulty securing childcare

- The deploying mother's mental health was poor

- The mother was deployed to a war theatre vs. a non-war theatre.

The researchers also found that children's adjustment problems were related to the number of changes in their lives and routines experienced as a result of the deployment. Encouragingly, a follow up two years later found that most of the adjustment problems that manifested during the deployment had not persisted, "suggesting that the effects of maternal separation [during the deployment] were transient".[21]

Kelly longitudinal study (2002) of the effects of deployment on children of Navy parents. Psychologist Michelle Kelly and colleagues recently completed a longitudinal study of deploying Navy mothers and their children.[22] The study examined:

- The effect of deployment on children's rates of internalizing behaviors (e.g., fear, sadness, over-controlled reactions) and/or externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, non-compliance, under-controlled reactions), compared with children of non-deployed mothers

- The effect of deployment on mother-child attachment and on maternal separation anxiety.

Kelly and colleagues (whose study appears in the Ender volume described earlier), surveyed 71 deploying Navy mothers of young children (average age of 3) and their primary childcare providers prior to, and after, the deployment. This longitudinal study began in 1996, and researchers continued to collect data for several years. A control group of 83 non-deploying Navy mothers were also surveyed at the same periods. Results indicated that children of deployed mothers exhibited higher levels of internalizing behavior than those whose mothers were assigned shore duty, and childcare providers (but not Navy mothers in the deployment group) reported higher rates of externalizing behaviors from the children than did non-deployed Navy mothers. About 12% of children of deployed mothers exhibited internalizing behaviors scores in the clinical range, compared to 1% of children of non-deployed mothers.

When asked what effects the deployment had on the family, about two-fifths (38%) of these deployed Navy mothers reported that the deployment was stressful for the family, and one-fourth (25%) felt their child had difficulty emotionally with the event. About one-third of deployed mothers believed the deployment had a positive effect on the child. Examples of positive effects included getting to spend more time with grandparents, and helping the child to mature or grow up. Researchers did note, however, that, "in contrast to older children [with deployed parents] whose behavior could be expected to improve, young children's behavior did not improve over time".[23] This finding of the Kelly et al. study is somewhat at odds with findings reported by Pierce et al. (discussed earlier), which indicated that children had no lasting deployment-related adjustment problems two years after the deployment event.

Jensen study (1996) of children's response to parental separation during the Gulf War. In a separate study examining children's responses to parental separation during the first Gulf War, Jensen et al. found that children whose parents had deployed exhibited higher levels of depression compared to children whose military parent did not deploy. No differences between children of non-deployed and deployed military parents were found with respect to other potential negative outcomes however, including child anxiety and behavior problems. Similar to the Kelly et al. study, Jensen and colleagues found that younger children were more vulnerable to the negative effects of deployment than older children.[24]

7. ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE NEEDS OF MILITARY CHILDREN

DoD Social Compact: An important step in an overall program to meet the needs of military service members and their families is the DOD Social Compact. The new Social Compact is DoD's philosophical statement of the government's responsibility to underwrite military family support programs. It is a report and a database that identifies regulatory requirements in the areas

of health care, housing, off-duty education, military child education, child care, recreation and fitness, personal financial stability, military spouse education and employment, and strengthening support to the reserve forces and employer support programs.[25] http://www.mfrc-dodqol.org/socialcompact

Partnerships: "Operation Purple" is a week-long program sponsored by a unique combination of non-profit (National Military Family Association), corporate (Sears and Roebuck, Inc.) and DoD organizations to meet the needs of military children with deploying parents. It is conducted in 11 states and helps children deal with the anxiety of separation. Approximately 1,000 military children participated in 2004. The youth camps are cost-free, except for a small registration fee, for children of active, reserve, and National Guard members. http://www.nmfa.org

National Organizations: Nationally, the National Association of Childcare Referral Services has launched Operation Childcare. More than 5,000 child-care providers have pledged free childcare for children of National Guard and Reserve personnel while they're home on leave. http://www.naccrra.net/

Military One Source: The DoD has combined the assistance programs of each service branch into one program called Military One Source. This is a one-stop place to go 7/24 whenever service members or family members need assistance. This program also offers 6 sessions of counseling for service members, their families and or their children. This counseling is anonymous and can be used any time.

DOD Youth Services: The *Report of the First Quadrennial Quality of Life Review* notes there is a need for supervised options for youth who may be stressed by the fear of physical harm to their parents while deprived of the guidance, support and nurturing normally provided by deployed parents. DoD has 350 youth centers that provide safe and secure environments where military youth can connect with their peers and participate in recreation and sports programs. Programs have been expanded considerably through partnerships with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the 4-H Clubs, and other national organizations.[26]

DOD outreach to Public Education services: Communication in the public school systems that educate the children of deployed personnel is essential. The Department has expanded their partnership with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Safe and Drug Free Schools to include work with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (sponsored by UCLA, Duke University and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Together the Department has have developed and made available the following information booklets: *Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment, Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Post Deployment: Challenges of Family Reunion,* and *Parent's Guide to the Military Child in Deployment*.[27]

DRAFT

8. FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: UNIQUE DEPLOYMENT CHALLENGES FOR FEMALE SERVICE MEMBERS

During the discussion of challenges that emerged during the deployment, DACOWITS asked female Service members to identify those issues or hardships that they felt were unique for women. The themes that most frequently emerged are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Deployment Challenges for Female Service members

Theme	Number and percent of groups in which theme emerged (n =29)	
Healthcare and Hygiene	24	83%
Differential Treatment	12	50%
Adequacy/Availability of Support Services	5	17%

These themes are discussed below.

Health and hygiene

The adequacy and availability of healthcare and related hygiene issues emerged as the predominant theme, reported in 83% of the focus groups in which this question was posed. Specifically, participants cited problems obtaining proper medical care and various hygiene products such as soap and sanitary napkins. One junior enlisted female in the Air Force explained:

> "If you're in the field and you have a medical issue, there's nothing available."
> —Junior enlisted female, USAF

Participants also mentioned the lack of shower and rest facilities both on the installation and during the trip to the installation. According to one senior enlisted female in the Army Reserve:

> "If you have to fly on a C-130 for 3 days and in between eat and drink, but not drink before getting on the plane since there aren't facilities - yes, that is a problem."
> —Senior enlisted female, USAR

Differential Treatment

Another theme that emerged in response to this question related to differential treatment. Female participants in 50% of focus groups explained that they encountered "differential treatment." For example, one senior enlisted female in the Army explained that she was the only female soldier in the company. She said:

> "It was like being exposed to an old boys' club."—Senior enlisted female, USA

Adequacy/Availability of Support Services

Participants in 17% of female focus groups reported the adequacy/availability of support services as a during deployment challenge. Specifically, female participants commented on the lack of female support.

> "[There's] no overall support for female on board and there is a feeling of isolation."
> – Senior enlisted female, Coast Guard

One female Service member expressed this positive comment about the support she received from her command during her deployment:

> "I was still breast feeding and had to send my milk back home on the C130. The hardest part was scheduling milk for back home. I was a very devoted breast feeder. I got a lot of support from the command [during this time]." – Senior enlisted female, USCG

These themes are presented by Service in Table 14. As the table indicates, lack of healthcare and hygiene for deploying women was the dominant theme across all Services.

Table 14: Deployment Challenges for Female Service members, by Service

Theme	Army (n = 4)		Air Force (n = 5)		Navy (n = 5)		Marine Corps (n = 4)		Coast Guard (n = 4)		Guard and Reserve (n =7)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Healthcare and Hygiene	3	75%	4	80%	5	100%	4	100%	2	50%	6	86%
Differential Treatment	3	75%	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%	2	50%	3	43%
Adequacy/Availability of Support Services	0	0%	1	20%	1	20%	2	50%	0	0%	1	14%

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS

DACOWITS asked Service members and their family members to make recommendations for improving future deployments. The themes that most frequently emerged are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Recommendations for Improving Future Deployments

Theme	Number and percent of groups in which theme emerged (n =48)	
Improve support services	22	46%
Workload and schedule	19	40%
Predictability	15	31%
Administrative issues	14	29%
Organizational characteristics	13	27%
Preparedness	12	25%

These recommendations are discussed below.

Improve support services

Participants in almost half (46%) of focus groups recommended improving support programs for spouses and families of deployed Service members. In making these recommendations, some family members discussed the isolation they felt from the lack of active spouse groups and family activities. One family member whose spouse was in the Army Reserve explained that "there was a regrettable lack of interest on the part of the base in the welfare of the families." She suggested a simple solution:

> "Rent a bowling alley. Invite these women and their kids, and give 'em a piece of pizza."
> --Family member, USAR

Echoing these comments, another family member whose spouse was in the Army Reserve elaborated on the need to include spouses in post-deployment activities:

"After the return, there was a party and the wives were not invited. We greet these men as heroes and the base says, 'Who's that woman? She took care of our kids, let's ignore her!'"
> --Family member, USAR

Participants believed that "better communication is needed," but disagreed as to the cause of poor communication. Some felt that the "infrastructure is there, but we need to do a better job of communicating what is available," while others felt that consistency, not dissemination, is the problem. One senior enlisted male in the Navy felt that "there are too many people telling us too many different things."

A senior enlisted male complimented the military's new information program, One Source:

> "The Army does have good program "one source." That's a pretty tight system."
> — Senior enlisted male, USA

Workload and schedule

Participants in two-fifths (40%) of the focus groups mentioned feeling dissatisfied with the distribution of duties, the stability of the work schedule, the quantity of leave time, or the process through which people are selected to deploy. Regarding the distribution of duties, many Service members declared that there are "too many tasks and not enough people" and that those who want to deploy are not given the opportunity to do so. Expressing his frustration, one junior enlisted male in the Marine Corps said:

> "I've been on zero deployments and I wanted to go."—Junior enlisted male, USMC

Predictability

Improving the predictability of the deployment was recommended in about one-third (31%) of the focus groups. Many Service members also cited timeline stabilization or the lack of a stable

work schedule as problematic. Participants explained that it was extremely frustrating not knowing when you are coming or going, or having your deployment extended.

Administrative issues

Participants in about one-third (29%) of the focus groups recommended improving administrative procedures, including those related to healthcare, special pay, and travel preparations. For example, Service members mentioned that better planning was needed in general. Specifically, one junior enlisted male in the Marine Corps suggested

> "bar codes be used to keep track of equipment, etc., so stuff won't be left behind."
> —Junior enlisted male, USMC

With regard to comments about special pay, it was suggested that the military make sure that those receiving BAS continue to receive it, and that family separation payments be made prior to the deployment.

Organizational characteristics

Participants in approximately one-quarter (27%) of the focus groups recommended improvements within the military organization. They recommended improving the quality of communication between leadership and Service members and their families. One senior male officer in the Air Force Base explained, "Squadron leaders need to get to know people better," while one Marine Corps family member complained that the "people in charge don't seem to know what they are doing or communicating what is happening."

Several female Service members made gender-specific recommendations. Observing that she was the only female in her unit, one senior enlisted female in the Coast Guard stated that "no one should be put in the same situation that I was as the only female" and that "people need to be trained on how to interact with different genders."

As a recommendation for future deployments, female Service members seemed to feel that increasing female support, particularly in senior ranks, would alleviate this problem. One senior enlisted female in the Marine Corps explained:

> "[H]aving a senior female go along would help some females who would like to talk to a female versus a male."—Senior enlisted female, USMC

Preparedness

Improving the unit's preparedness was a recommendation in 25% of focus groups. Several Service members expressed a need for more modern, reliable equipment. Several junior enlisted males commented that the equipment was simply too old: "We use radios from Vietnam" and the "flak vests are 20 years old." One junior enlisted male in the Marine Corps went so far as to state that the quality of the equipment may impact his retention decision.

10. EFFECT OF EARLY RETURNS ON INDIVIDUAL AND UNIT MORALE

DACOWITS also asked Service members if personnel returning home early from a deployment for personal reasons (e.g., emergency leave, pregnancy) had an effect on individual and unit morale. Typically, most groups contained a mix of personnel with different opinions; some believed this was an issue, some did not, and some were undecided. Table 16 indicates there was a greater number of focus groups (33) that contained participants who answered 'yes' to this question than groups containing participants who answered 'no' (16), and more than half the groups (30) contained participants who were undecided on the matter.

Table 16: Impact of early Returns

Is there a negative effect on individual or unit morale by early returns?	Number and percent of groups in which response was recorded (n=53)	
Yes	33	62%
No	16	30%
Maybe	30	57%

Within those sessions in which Service members elaborated on why early returns had a negative impact, the most common reasons were that:

- Early returns leave units understaffed, which increases personal workload for members of the unit (recorded in 16 groups)

- There is a sense of differential treatment (recorded in 5 groups).

One senior enlisted male in the Air Force summed up the impact succinctly:

"We have to pick up the slack when other people can't go."— Senior enlisted male, USAF

Among participants reporting that early returns do not affect morale, the most common reasons were that

- One needs to put oneself in another's shoes (recorded in 4 groups)

- Leave helps morale (recorded in 3 groups).

Those espousing this view argued that they would want the same consideration if they faced a personal need to return home early. Interestingly, one junior enlisted male in the Army felt that leave can sometimes help boost morale, at least on the home front:

"During the year I spent in Korea, I got environment leave. We went to a FRG and talked about our mission. I gave them more information in 30 days than they received in 6 months. That helped morale."—Junior enlisted male, USA

A substantial portion of participants explained that the specific situation determines the impact of an early return on morale, listing these reasons most frequently:

- Depends on the situation or reason (recorded in 28 groups)

- Depends on leadership (recorded in 3 groups).

11. FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: CHALLENGES FOR RESERVISTS

Recognizing that Reservists are a unique population, DACOWITS was interested in Reserve-specific issues. In light of the critical role Reservists play in current military operations, the following section is devoted to examining Reserve issues before, during, and after mobilization/deployment.

11.1 Pre-deployment issues: Reserve and Guard focus groups

Pre-deployment issues that most frequently emerged in the focus groups held with Reserve and Guard members are shown in Table 17. The major themes were similar to those raised by active component personnel and families.

Table 17: Pre-deployment Challenges for Reserve and Guard participants*

Theme	Number and percent of groups in which theme emerged (n = 10)	
Responsibilities of being prepared	9	90%
Unpredictability	7	70%
Administrative and financial issues	5	50%
Childcare arrangements and issues	5	50%

Responsibilities of being prepared

Participants in nearly all (90%) Reserve focus groups mentioned that being prepared was a challenge they actually faced or anticipated facing during pre-deployment. A major component of this responsibility, recorded in more than one-half (50%) of Reserve focus, was managing individual responsibilities, like finding help to move and informing their civilian employer of their schedule. For example:

"When I got deployed, they said, 'next week you're going to be sent out.' I have an apartment that I'm renting; so, I had to get out that week. My problem was I didn't have anyone to help me move my stuff out of the apartment, because the majority of the people in my squadron had already left."—Junior enlisted female, USAR

One reserve family member suggested that, due to the increased frequency of reserve deployments:

"The Texas Air Guard is making FRGs (Family Readiness Groups) a high priority"
— Reserve family member

Unpredictability

Participants in more than two-thirds (70%) of Reserve focus groups mentioned that unpredictability of the deployment schedule was a challenge they actually faced or anticipated facing during pre-deployment. Reservists who spoke on this issue felt that lack of advanced notice detracted from their personal preparation time. That is, not knowing the ship date interfered with their ability to properly prepare themselves and their families for deployment. Reservists also mentioned the difficulty in saying goodbye to family members multiple times, a theme echoed in 2003 DACOWITS focus groups and in the literature on military families and deployments.

> "It would be helpful if there was a set date for both coming and going."
> –Senior enlisted female, USNR

> "When they were first deployed, we were told they weren't coming back until March or February. Then we were told they were coming later – there was so much misinformation – tell me the real deal. Every time you went to the 'right person' they said, "Well, I don't know, I really can't say right now.""— Reserve family member

Administrative and Financial Issues

Participants in one-half (50%) of Reserve focus groups experienced administrative challenges during pre-deployment. Most participants mentioning this issue reported problems related to managing power-of-attorney and other legal matters as well as making financial arrangements.

In support of this idea, one senior female officer in the Naval Reserves explained that the hardest part of pre-deployment is dealing with

> "family issues [such as] wills, getting set to pay all the bills, and doing a transfer of credit cards if necessary."—Senior Officer, USNR

Childcare Arrangements and Issues

Also recorded in one-half of (50%) Reserve focus groups were issues related to making childcare arrangements. This includes physically making "arrangements for kids to stay with a parent or someone else," finding "reliable caregivers," and "getting [children] to understand" the nature of deployment. One senior enlisted female in the Army Reserves felt that

> "the hardest part was getting my children to understand [what was going on]. My son was 6 and my daughter was 3. My son understands, 'mom won't be here for 2 weeks,' but my daughter cried for me every night."— Senior enlisted female, USAR

11.2 Issues During Deployment: Reserve and Guard Focus Groups

During-deployment issues that most frequently emerged in the focus groups held with Reserve and Guard members are shown in Table 18. The major themes were similar to those raised by active component personnel and families.

Table 18: During-Deployment Challenges for Reserve and Guard participants

Theme	Number and percent of groups in which theme emerged (n =11)	
Adjusting to lifestyle and role changes	7	64%
Communication problems	7	64%
Childcare arrangements	7	64%
Work/Family balance	5	45%

Adjusting to lifestyle and role changes

More than two-thirds (64%) of Reserve focus groups contained at least one participant who experienced problems adjusting to changes in lifestyle and roles. Participants in more than one-third (36%) of Reserve focus groups experienced emotional adjustment problems, and the same percentage reported problems adapting to the shift in responsibilities such as managing the household, childcare, and employment. One senior enlisted male in the Army Reserve mentioned that his wife had trouble adapting to the shift in responsibilities:

> "This was my wife's first experience with me being deployed. She didn't handle it very well. I found out when I returned about things she hadn't handled very well. She had spent all my money - lent it to friends, didn't pay the bills, etc. She was just lost."
> —Senior enlisted male, USAR

Communication Problems

Participants in more than two-thirds (64%) of Reserve focus groups experienced communication problems during deployment. Individual participants reported problems related to the dispersal and receipt of information. When asked to describe the most difficult challenges faced during deployment, one senior enlisted Airwoman mentioned the "lack of phones and the amount of time allotted per caller."

Participants in 7 reserve groups cited difficulties with the dispersal and receipt of accurate information about the deployment. For example, one reserve family member suggested:

> "The problem is finding out who the appointed people to call are. There's no contact list given to the spouses."— Reserve family member

Other assessed communication during deployment more positively:

> "It's good to have access to cheap phone cards…e-mail is great especially in Europe [and] Family Readiness has e-mail access and video phone"
> — Reserve family member

Childcare Arrangements

Participants in more than two-thirds (64%) of Reserve focus groups experienced problems with childcare. Specifically, participants in more than one-half (55%) of Reserve focus groups pinpointed issues related to the adequacy and availability of childcare and youth activities, and participants in more than one-third (36%) of Reserve focus groups reported that their children had emotional adjustment and/or behavior problems.

"I had things in control when I deployed for Desert Storm. I had one child. He was 10. He was comfortable with me going someplace, but, by the time I actually left, he was extremely apprehensive until he actually talked to me on the phone."
– Senior enlisted female, USAR

"My children are with my parents. I did have a hard time getting them in school. Plus, daycare is expensive because I'm the only one who's supporting them."
– Junior enlisted female, USAR

Some family members believed that Family Care Plans were unrealistic for families of deploying personnel they knew:

"[One] person had 4 children and a bad care plan that was wholly unrealistic… The only people who get to see the care plan are the commander(s). The people who are looking at it aren't looking with a critical eye. Had they called her, they would have known they had broken up."
—Reserve family member

Work/Family Balance

Participants in about half (45%) of Reserve focus groups encountered issues related to work/family balance. Specifically, individual participants experienced trouble managing their interpersonal relationships. According to one junior enlisted Airwoman, the most difficult aspect of the deployment process was the "stress on [my] marriage," while another junior enlisted Airman "missed activities with [my] children."

11.3 Post-Deployment Issues: Reserve and Guard Focus Groups

Post-deployment issues that most frequently emerged in the focus groups held with Reserve and Guard members are shown in Table 19. These themes echo those articulated within active component groups, although the stress on administrative and financial issues was notable in the Reserve groups.

Table 19: Post-Deployment Challenges for Reservists*

Theme	Number and percentage of groups in which theme emerged (n=11)	
Administrative and financial issues	8	73%
Reunion and readjustment	7	64%
Support from programs, services and leadership	2	18%
Leave	2	18%

Administrative and Financial Issues

Participants in about three-fourths (73%) of Reserve focus groups experienced administrative or financial problems post-deployment, particularly as with respect to their civilian employment. For example, a junior enlisted Airman experienced trouble with his civilian employer:

"[My] employer didn't have enough information and [it was] difficult [for him] not knowing when I was coming back."— Junior enlisted male, USAFR

One reserve family member—who expressed that her family had no difficulties financially but that others did—offered the following:

"Make a suggestion that when you go back – if the Defense Department could come up with some kind of incentive program for employers, to help employers take better care of activated soldiers…"— Reserve family member

Another family member suggested that, in her spouse's unit

"… the rotational AD (active-duty) tours [are]too hard on families and employers/creditor relations— Reserve family member

Difficulties With Reunion and Readjustment

The theme of reunion and readjustment was described as a post-deployment challenge in more than three-fifths (64%) of Reserve focus groups. Individual participants pinpointed problems related to relationship dynamics, role readjustment, and reintegration into the household routine. As one senior female officer in the Naval Reserves put it

"Stuff happens while you are gone and it is hard to get back into the routine."
—Female senior officer, USNR

Echoing these comments, one senior enlisted Airwoman observed:

"What took years to prepare, you have one day to get back into the routine."
–Senior enlisted female, USAFR

Others stressed that there were benefits to this phase:

"Home schooling helped reunite with dad" —Reserve family member

Support from programs, services and leadership

One-fifth (18%) of Reserve focus groups contained at least one person who reported insufficient support as a post-deployment challenge. Participants in one-tenth (9%) of Reserve focus groups felt that they lacked support from leadership, while another one-tenth (9%) felt that the military programs/services provided inadequate support.

"[There was] no leadership at the general level to deal with post deployment [issues]."
- Senior female officer, USNR

"When we heard about the flight crews coming home, we heard of parties, etc. It just exacerbated the fact that nobody came to greet us. I know it's hard to do it for individuals. It just would have made such an impact. 'Ok, so I guess our mission didn't mean anything.'"
– Junior enlisted female, USAR

Leave

One-fifth (18%) of Reserve focus groups contained at least one person who reported insufficient leave time as a post-deployment challenge. For some individual participants, lack of rest and relaxation meant not having a break between deployment and redeployment.

"In some situations, [you're] being deployed and then [you come] back and then [you're] deployed again quickly. [There's] never time to adjust and your personal tempo is always high."
– Senior female officer, USAFR

Other participants commented on the lack of available leave time:

"When I got back, the difficult part was that I didn't get any time off. If you didn't take your leave while you were on orders, you had to sell your leave back, and you couldn't take any time off. The AD got 2 weeks off. It's the same letter that I read in '00, but they said you're a Reservist. Anybody in AD who was deployed over 90 days got 10 days off."
- Senior enlisted female, USAR

11.4 Income and Employment Issues for Reserve and Guard Participants

As Citizen-Soldiers, most Reservists must balance their citizen employment obligations with their Reserve duties and responsibilities. Several questions that explored these issues were posed to Reserve groups. Table 20 documents the Reservists' perceptions of how deployment affected their income and civilian employer.

Table 20: Did the deployment impact your family's income or cause any problems for your civilian employer?

Response	Number and percent of groups in which response was recorded (n =8)	
Yes	5	63%
No	4	50%

When asked whether deployment impacted their family's income or caused any problems for their civilian employer, participants in more than three-fifths (63%) of Reserve Service member focus groups replied in the affirmative, although examples of both income loss and income gain were recorded in a similar number of groups. Participants in one-half (50%) of groups reported

that deployment did not impact their family's income or cause any problems for their civilian employer.

Participants in 3 Reserve focus groups reported an income increase. One senior enlisted male in the Army Reserves explained:

> "My check was bigger than my normal check because my income was tax-free."
> — Senior enlisted male, USAR

Participants in 3 Reserve focus groups experienced an income decrease. Illustrating this point, one junior enlisted female in the Army Reserves revealed:

> "A few months before I deployed, my job gave me a hard time. I had my salary and position lowered."— Junior enlisted female, USAR

As stated, one-half (50%) of Reserve focus groups contained at least one participant who reported that deployment did not impact his or her family's income or cause problems for his or her civilian employer. In support of this idea, one junior enlisted female in the Army Reserve recalled her experience:

> "It wasn't a problem that I was coming back. They gracefully accepted me. My co-workers were beyond supportive."—Junior enlisted female, USAR

Participants in one-half (50%) of Reserve focus groups commented on their civilian employer's attitude toward deployment, with a relative balance between those who suggested their civilian employer's attitude was supportive (recorded in 4 groups) and those who described their civilian employer's attitude as not supportive (recorded in 4 groups). Among the latter, it was suggested that employers needed more information about certain topics, such as how duty requirements have changed in recent years.

11.4 Use of Installation Programs and Services by Reserve and Guard Participants

At least some participants in nearly all (88%) Reserve groups reported members of the Reserve community advantage of installation and/or unit support programs and services (Table 21).

Table 21: Awareness of use of Installation programs and services by Reserve family members

Are you aware if Reserve/National Guard family members take advantage of installation and/or unit support programs?	Number and percent of groups in which response was recorded (n =8)	
Yes	7	88%
No	2	25%

One senior enlisted female in the Air Force Reserves recounted a time during which support services assisted her:

"I had a situation; 1.5 months after activation, a car pulled out in front of me and totaled my car. The guy didn't have insurance, and I had to come up with a down payment on a car. The AF aid came through. [They gave me] a no-interest loan."
—Senior Enlisted female, USAFR

Only a small percentage of groups (25%) contained participants who were not aware whether Reserve/National Guard family members take advantage of installation and/or unit support programs and services."

Some family members expressed that they took advantage of installation-based programs and services, but that they

"…are too far to drive to regularly"— Reserve family member

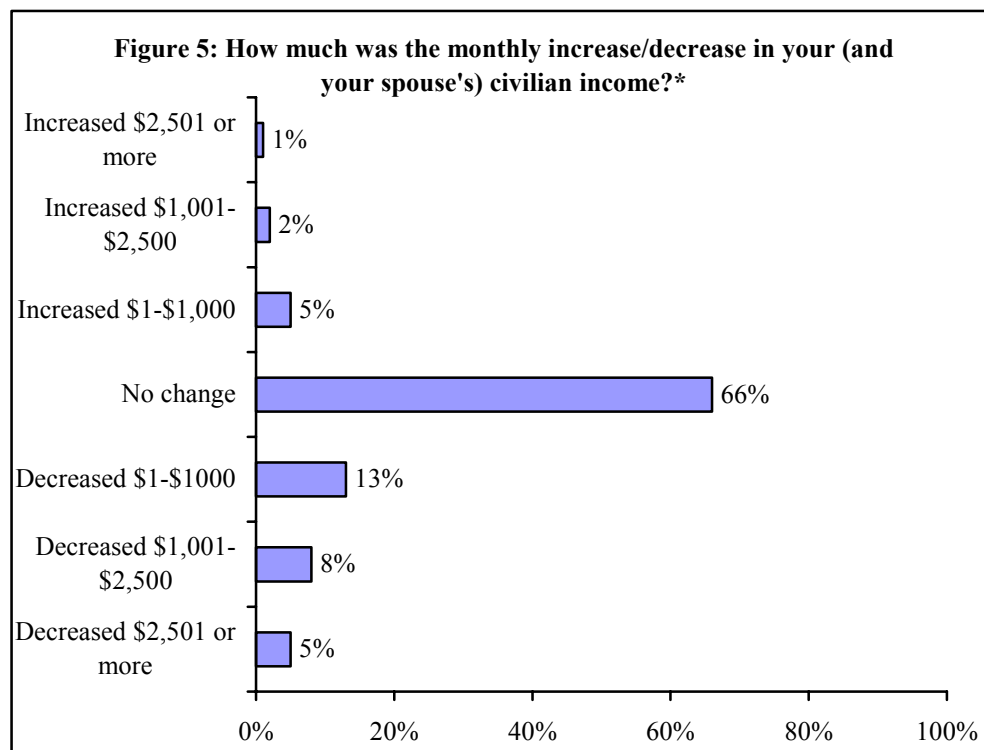## 12. UNIQUE DEPLOYMENT-RELATED ISSUES FOR RESERVISTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Since September 11, 2001, the Reserve and National Guard of each of the military Services have experienced more frequent mobilization and deployment compared to earlier periods. Reserve and National Guard personnel and their families often face a unique set of challenges compared to their counterparts.[28] This section highlights several of the most salient deployment-related issues that are largely unique to Reserve and National Guard, they include:

- Possible loss of family income from a civilian job

- Greater distance to installation-based support resources

- Lack of awareness of support resources available to Reserve family members.

Loss of Family Income from a Civilian Job. Extended deployments are becoming financially difficult for many members of the Reserve and National Guard and their families. Most Reserve and National Guard must leave their civilian jobs when activated. Although most Reserve component personnel do not report a loss of income due to mobilization and deployment (see Figure 5), some Reserve and National Guard members have reported losing their civilian employment and/or health benefits, taking pay cuts, or giving up hard-earned assets as a result of mobilization.[29] Although the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994 requires that Reserve and National Guard members be re-hired when the mobilization is over, these job protections do not apply when there are company-wide layoffs.

For family members of the Reserve and National Guard, major changes in a Service member's civilian job status or pay can impact overall family income, and can have direct and immediate consequences on the spouse's own employment. For example, the spouse might be required to change their work schedule, leave a job to attend to childcare or address other circumstances resulting from the member's prolonged absence.

Surveys of Reserve and National Guard personnel who have recently experienced a mobilization indicate that civilian income loss is not uncommon. For example, data from the May 2003 *Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members* indicate that, among members who had experienced a mobilization within the past 2 years, more than one-fourth (26%) reported losing family income from a civilian job. About one-eighth (13%) of the Reserve and National Guard with recent mobilization experience reported losing more than $1000 per month (Figure 5)., One-third of spouses completing the 2002 *Survey of Spouses of Activated National Guard and Reserve Component Members* reported a family income loss as a result of mobilization.[30]

Figure 5: How much was the monthly increase/decrease in your (and your spouse's) civilian income?*

Category	Percent
Increased $2,501 or more	1%
Increased $1,001-$2,500	2%
Increased $1-$1,000	5%
No change	66%
Decreased $1-$1000	13%
Decreased $1,001-$2,500	8%
Decreased $2,501 or more	5%

* Source: May 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members: Tabulations of Responses.

While Reserves and National Guard accrue active duty military pay and benefits while mobilized, data from the 2003 Status of Forces survey indicate that the average increase in military compensation reported by mobilized members (an increase of $275 per month) was not as large as the average reduction in family income from civilian sources (a loss of $440 per month). The net result is an average loss of $1980 per year, per member, when these figures are pro-rated.

One consequence of income loss experienced by Reserve and National Guard families is that many have difficulty keeping up with mortgage payments while the member is mobilized. Delegates to the 2003 Conference of the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) recently identified mortgage relief for Reserve and National Guard families as one of the most important issues currently faced by these families. They recommended that mortgage relief be accomplished through an amendment to the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act. The amendment would be written to ensure affected families could defer the difference between the existing mortgage

obligation on the family's primary residence and the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) while mobilized.[31]

Among the many identified job-related difficulties (e.g., employer problems, job reinstatement), most were rated as serious or very serious problems by 10% or fewer of the Reserve and National Guard with recent mobilization experience (Table 22). The exceptions include "loss of promotion opportunity" (15%) and "got behind in advances in civilian occupation" (14%). The a lack of advancement or promotion opportunities at work due to military deployments can have implications for these members future civilian earnings. These circumstances may, in turn, affect the future retention decisions of Service members in the Reserve and National Guard.

Table 22: Impact of mobilization on Reservists' and family members' civilian employment*

For your most recent activation, how much of a problem was each of the following for you or your family?	Serious or Very serious problem	Somewhat of a problem	Not a problem or Slight problem
Loss of a promotion opportunity	15%	11%	74%
Got behind in advances in civilian occupation	14%	11%	75%
Loss of seniority or job responsibility on civilian job	10%	7%	83%
Other employer problems when you returned to your job	9%	7%	84%
Getting the same job back after returning	8%	7%	85%
Employer problems at the beginning of the activation/deployment	7%	13%	79%
Loss of a civilian job	5%	3%	92%
Demotion in a civilian job	4%	3%	93%
Hostility from a supervisor	4%	5%	91%
Hostility from coworkers	2%	4%	95%

* Source: May 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members: Tabulations of Responses.

Distance to installation-based support resources. Reserve and National Guard families typically live much further from installation-based support programs and services than their counterparts. These services include support groups, childcare facilities, counselors and chaplains, commissaries and exchanges, and others. Table 23 shows rates of use for each of support services among spouses of recently activated National Guard and Reserve personnel. With the exception of commissary and exchanges, less than half of surveyed spouses report using these services during the member's activation.

Table 23: Use of military support services by spouses of deployed Guard and Reserve personnel*

Service or program	Percent of spouses reporting use
▪ Exchange	54%
▪ Commissary	51%
▪ Medical services	46%
▪ Pre-activation support	37%
▪ Legal services	29%
▪ Financial information/counseling	25%
▪ Finance center	20%
▪ Morale, welfare and recreation services	15%
▪ Chaplain services	8%

* 2002 Survey of Spouses of Activated National Guard and Reserve Component Members

The time and distance required for Reserve and Guard family members to access these resources plays a significant role in their rates of use. For example, almost three-fifths (57%) of spouses surveyed in 2000 indicated that distance limits their use of commissaries "very much" or "completely." The same pattern held true for exchange use (Table 24).

Table 24: Factors limiting commissary and exchange use by Reserve spouses*

How much do the following limit your use of the commissary?	Very Much/ Completely	Somewhat	Not at all/ Very little
Distance	57%	13%	30%
Hours	13%	20%	67%
Prices	8%	12%	81%
Stock	7%	16%	76%
How much do the following limit your use of the exchange?	**Very Much/ Completely**	**Somewhat**	**Not at all/ Very little**
Distance	55%	13%	32%
Stock	13%	20%	67%
Prices	12%	18%	70%
Hours	12%	17%	71%

* Source: 2000 Survey of Spouses of Reserve Component Personnel

Lack of awareness of support resources available to Reserve and National Guard family members. A lack of awareness of available resources is another challenge to efforts to support family members of Guard and Reserve personnel during deployments. Based on data from the *2002 Survey of Spouses of Activated National Guard and Reserve Component Members*, lack of awareness is the major factor in the relatively low attendance of spouses at pre-activation briefings: of nearly 4000 military spouses of National Guard and Reserve members called to active duty, more than one-half (52%) reported they were not aware that such a briefing had taken place. An additional 13% reported they were invited, but did not attend.[32] To raise awareness and improve deployment support within this community of families, study recommendations included maintaining a goal of 100% contact with every spouse, and

emphasizing that Reserve and Guard units "establish 'ownership' of every family via their family readiness programs." [33]

Connecting Reserve component families, who live across America, with the services they need presents a particular challenge. An aggressive effort to reach Reserve families is under way. In October 2002, DoD created the Joint Family Readiness Working Group to share strategies, identify gaps in service, and review lessons learned. Since that time, the Joint Family Readiness Working Group has promoted the sharing of best practices and pushed to increase mutual support across Service and component boundaries. Moreover, this joint vision has spread to all levels of the Reserve components, leading to an increase in shared support and joint practices at the unit level. This collaboration has contributed to increased overall support for vital family readiness programs to assist Guard and Reserve families, including the establishment of approximately 400 National Guard Family Assistance Centers to augment the family support resources. At the same time, the National Guard has taken the lead in supporting families that are geographically isolated from military installations, working through 54 state and territory offices to provide family support and training. Unit Family Readiness Groups, staffed by volunteers, actively maintain communication with families in outlying areas through newsletters, web sites, and direct communication to enhance unit-to-family communication.[34]

13. ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO DEPLOYMENTS

Counseling: DOD is building upon the new One Source by implementing a program of face-to-face, non-medical counseling for military families experiencing the normal stress of deployments and reunions. The lack of counseling services to assist troops and families cope with stress results in increased family deterioration, frequent duty disruptions, and dissatisfaction with military life. This situation, in turn, negatively impacts unit readiness and compounds retention problems. As a result, the Department has begun to provide counseling services that are short-term, solution-focused, and targeted to situational problems. Counselors will address stress-related work-life problems associated with the unique demands of the military lifestyle, especially those associated with a high tempo environment. The counseling services are provided by individuals trained in an appropriate social or behavioral science discipline who are licensed, certified, or credentialed for independent practice.[35]

Childcare: Deployment produces a critical and unrelenting need for additional childcare. To reduce interruptions in family routines, military child development centers develop and activate Childcare Mobilization and Contingency Plans as needed. These plans augment normal operations in a variety of ways:

- Childcare hours of operation may be adjusted to support an extended duty day or to provide more hourly care to support unit briefings.

- Pre-identified alternative child care sites are employed to expand capacity

- Staff recruitment and background check actions are expedited to replace family member employees and to accommodate the increase in the number of children to be served
- Augmented safety and security measures may include the designation of childcare staff as "mission essential personnel" in order to provide childcare services to other mission essential personnel.
- Fees are often reduced and childcare hours extended in support of the mission may be provided at little or no cost to Service members.[36]

Outreach: Another key element is command outreach to members, their families and the communities in which they live on a continuing basis rather than just during deployments. There is also a need for more outreach to Service members' parents, siblings, and significant others. This task is complicated by the geographic separation of military members' extended family or lack of access to military installations. To address this issue, ongoing deployment training stresses that, prior to any deployment, Service members should provide their parents and significant others with multiple sources for obtaining information during the Service member's absence.[37]

Commissary and exchanges: In support of current deployments, there are 52 Tactical Field Exchanges, 69 exchange supported/unit run field exchanges, and 15 ships' stores in the OIF/OEF theaters providing quality goods at a savings, and quality services necessary for day-to day living. Goods and services offered include phone call centers, satellite phones, internet cafes, video films, laundry and tailoring, photo development, health and beauty products, barber and beauty shops, vending and amusement machines, food and beverages, and name-brand fast food operations. Goods and services vary by location based on troop strength and unit mission requirements. [38]

Community Partnerships: Attention needs to be paid to community building among military families, with particular support for those families who have members who are deployed. This community building takes two basic forms:

- Enhancing the cohesiveness and interaction between the military unit, its family support structure and military families

- Encouraging and enhancing the connections between the military community and the surrounding civilian community

- Unit leadership, Family Center services and outreach programs are the keys to building a strong sense of community among the personnel and families associated with the unit. In the current environment, the focus of their efforts must be the mobilization, deployment, and return/reunion initiatives crucial to the unit mission.[39]

Strategic Responses: The DoD and the Services recognize that unpredictability surrounding deployments (e.g., not knowing how long they will last, confusion about departure/return dates, etc.) magnifies the stress associated with separation. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently noted, the Department has been working hard to provide as much predictability as

possible in the lives of Service members.[40] Among the changes underway to improve the mobilization and deployment process, the Secretary of Defense and leaders within the individual Services have initiated efforts to:

- **Give Service members the longest notice possible**, so that they, their families, and— in the case of Reserve and National Guard — their employers, have as much time as possible to plan and prepare.

- **Limit the length of tours**: "The goal is to have Army mobilizations of up to a maximum of 18 months, including accrued leave…for a maximum of 12 months boots on the ground in Iraq, and Marine mobilizations up to 12 months, with up to 7 months boots on the ground."

- **Use Active component forces from all the Services, including support forces, to the maximum extent possible.**

- **Transition forces such that the process is staggered,** "with sufficient overlap so that there can be a transfer of relationships, and so the situational awareness…is passed on to [the] replacements."

- **Use contractors, when possible**, to provide logistics support, training support and other functions.

- **Establish quality of life initiatives** to support the up-to-12 month tour length.

- **Deploy or extend forces who volunteer for the deployment or extension to the maximum extent possible**

- **Ensure that Service members, including Guard and Reserve forces, are dealt with respectfully**, just as each of them has demonstrated their respect and love of country by volunteering to serve.

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[1] This theme appears in the 2003 DACOWTIS report as "making arrangements on short or uncertain notice."

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[34] *Report of the First Quadrennial Quality of Life Review* (need complete reference).

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[37] Ibid

[38] Ibid

[39] Ibid

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